DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 188 767 PS 011 535

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TITLE Management of Child Care's Most Expensive Resource--Staff Time.
PUB DATE Nov 79
NOTE 20p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Atlanta, GA, November 8-11, 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Caregivers: *Day Care: Early Childhood Education: *Efficiency: *Personnel Management: *Program Administration: *Staff Development

ABSTRACT

This paper identifies two steps day care administrators can take to more efficiently manage staff time. The first step is to know what, why, where, when and how tasks are to be done. The administrator must know whether or not staff activities contribute to the goals of the center. This is the basic element of conserving staff time. The second step is to consider administrative actions which lead to better staff functioning. Management can encourage increased production by (1) treating staff with respect: (2) providing a staff support system: (3) helping staff with special children: (4) handling problems promptly: (5) promoting staff development: (6) observing each staff member's work: (7) evaluating performance: (8) recognizing individual accomplishments and planning for continued growth: (9) caring enough about each staff member to be interested in them as people: (10) allowing for sharing, give and take, and shared decision-making: (11) defining expectations clearly: (12) providing resources: (13) providing a professional atmosphere: and (14) using volunteers appropriately. Managing staff time is a dynamic process. The goal is to facilitate staff to do the right tasks in a satisfactory and competent manner. (Author/RH)

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MANAGEMENT OF CHILD CARE'S MOST EXPENSIVE RESOURCE--STAFF TIME

by

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Presentation To:
Annual Conference
National Association for the Education of Young Children
November, 1979

PS011535

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MANAGEMENT OF CHILD CARE'S MOST

EXPENSIVE RESOURCE--STAFF TIME

Background

This information is based on coordination of and participation in two task forces and personal experience. The task forces were on the development of day care staffing criteria and day care, families and stress. Each produced publications.*

The task force on day care staffing studied criteria to be used in assigning and managing the day care related staff of the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR). The task force was made up of contracted consultants and TDHR state officials and regional staff. Its activities included:

.review of literature on management and personnel (bibliography attached)

.development of data collection instruments

.review of information collected

.exploration of alternatives

Three batches of information were collected and analyzed:

(1) Descriptions of job functions for two broad categories of staff, monitoring/training/program resource personnel and contracting/budgeting personnel;

*Trexler and associates. Development of day care staffing criteria. Austin, Texas: Texas Department of Human Resources, 1977.

Child Development Program Division, Texas Department of Human Resources. Day care, families and stress. Austin, Texas, 1980.

(2) Questionnaires indicating who was doing the activities identified in (1) above and how many hours were being spent on each activity;

(3) Interview responses (taped) from a sample of staff and administration on

.Overall task force recommendations

.Combining of staff functions

.Deletion of some staff functions

.Reassigning or contracting-out some functions

The result has been that approximately 110 staff (all levels from program manager to clerk-typist included) have operated the Title XX day care program in Texas. They have budgeted for program components throughout the state; reported to TDHR administration, HEW and legislature ; reviewed the HEW Day Care Requirements; developed resource materials; and contracted with, managed, monitored compliance with the Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements (on-site four or more times per year), provided technical assistance, and arranged training for over 500 contracts with 2300 facilities and 2700 children. To accomplish this in such a large geographic area, the efficient management of staff was critical.

The task force on day care, families and stress drew on its members' over 200 combined years of experience in varied capacities with children, families and child care. From this it was able to identify and suggest ways to deal with the stresses that affect day care.

Fundamental Time Management

Efficient time management is based on objectively exploring the five fundamental management questions. The questions can be used effectively by an

individual evaluating his or her own use of time or by an executive evaluating a program or number of programs:

1. What is the job (task)?

In studying a job such as getting ready for naptime, questions would need to be answered regarding what the job is, such as:

.What steps or process are included in the job?

.What is it intended to accomplish?

.Who does the job?

.How many people are involved?

2. Why is the job done?

Often a job is done for more than one reason. It is important to determine what the reasons are and whether they are valid. Below are questions which test the validity of these reasons, along with examples of changes in practice when the question was asked.

Questions	Examples
.Is the job necessary?	.Putting tricycles away at the end of the day, instead of each teacher putting them away after her/his group's outdoor period.
.Who would care if it wasn't done?	.Omitting lettered signs on the 3-year-old group's bulletin board.
.Does it improve the quality of day care services?	.Rearranging furniture in the classroom only when necessary to accommodate a new activity rather than routinely every month.
.Does it improve relationships?	.Using a variety of themes instead of having the total center on one with scarce resources.
.Does it save money?	.Staff preparing play materials rather than routinely cutting napkins in half to make two.

Questions	Examples
.Does it make other jobs easier?	.Refilling small glue containers instead of putting large economy size ones out for children's art.

3. Where is the job done?

Often time and energy and sometimes money can be saved by changing the job site. To evaluate whether the job is performed at the most efficient location, answer such questions as:

.Could the job be done in the classroom with the children assisting rather than by the caregiver leaving them?

.Is enough space available?

.Does it take a lot of preparation to get the work location ready?

.What is most convenient to the majority of people?

.Is the work place comfortable?

.Can the person I need to work with come to the location?

.Is someone available to watch the children if the caregiver must go somewhere elese to do the task?

.Are the necessary materials near at hand?

4. When is the job done?

Choosing the right time or frequency of contact often causes the job to be done better and easier. By answering questions such as these, staff can decide on the best time:

.What else must be done at about the same time?

.Can you get the materials that you need by then?

.Will the others involved be available to work with you?

.Could this job be done less often?

.Should this job be done more frequently?

5. How is the job done?

There are often many ways in which a job can be done to yield a satisfactory product or outcome. In answering the questions above, many ways of doing the job will have been eliminated. Choose the method to be used through answering such questions as:

.Is it effective?

.Could it be made simpler?

.Could any steps or process be eliminated?

.Do you have the necessary tools to do it? Are they the most appropriate ones for the job?

.Does the method enable you to use resources efficiently?

.Are there any parts that could be combined with other jobs?

.Could you reorder the sequence in which parts are done to give better results, finish quicker, make the job easier?

.Are you comfortable with this method?

.Will it disrupt what others are doing?

The management questions given above can help child care facilities deal with both simple and complex problems. After asking the above questions, a rather unique approach was taken by one facility in handling a problem:

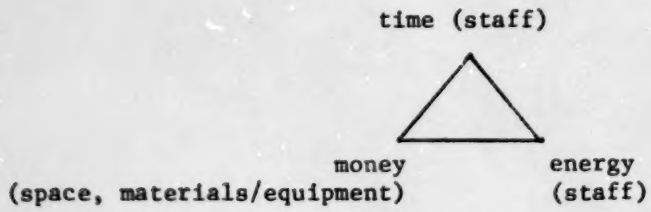
Problem. The children arrived just bouncing off the walls each morning with a mixture of energy, enthusiasm and hostility. Since it was a day care group with parents who had to be at work early each morning, the teacher's only opportunity for interaction and conferences with parents

was at the end of the day. Although the teacher had an aide, she was unskilled and shy. To provide staff coverage of a 10-hour day, only one of them could be present from 7 to 9 A.M. and 4 to 6 P.M.

Solution. The teacher arranged to work the early shift three days and the late shift two days of each week. In this way, she still had contact with parents, but was available to get the children off to a calmer, more effective start on most mornings. Through the development of routines and conferences with the aide, the children were soon having a consistently good start on their day.

Other solutions (midday break for the teacher, assigning a different aide, etc.) might have worked just as well. The important thing was that the center used some originality and got desirable results.

When looking at jobs to be done, you have three somewhat interchangeable resources:



Better equipment and materials can often save time and energy. Time and energy can be used to improvise materials and equipment. Time can be saved by performing a task at a brisk pace with a high energy expenditure. A leisurely pace uses less energy but takes more time. The trick is to get best performance from the available level of these resources.

Involve your staff in looking at the jobs in your facility. Be creative and try new things. A lot of time and effort is wasted because no one has ever questioned a long-standing but inefficient way of doing a task.

The Human Factors

In addition to looking at the basic management functions, you need to look at the human factors. No matter how well your resources are organized and activities planned, lack of consideration for the human factors can undermine your operation. The challenge of learning and producing good work carries some stress with it. People may need pressure to encourage them to seek the information they need, develop skills, and succeed in their endeavors. However a compound of unnecessary demands, unrealistic expectations, too much competition, insufficent respect or recognition for individual needs (or talents or ideas), and inadequate materials is sure to create stress too difficult for staff members to bear and work effectively. Ultimately as a decision-maker, you are responsible for ensuring a safe, secure environment; a satisfied, productive staff; and happy children whose needs are being met. This means there must be a professional setting with clearly defined expectations.

1. Provide a support system for staff

As an administrator, you arrange for and maintain the support system for the staff. They need your understanding and support in order to maintain cooperative working relationships. Consider the following suggestions for providing support for them:

.Know the staff, their names and something about their interests. In a day care center, it helps to know the children and their names, too.

.Spend some time observing both indoor and outdoor classrooms. You need to know what's happening in order to make well founded decisions. Do not let a problem slide until it gets out of hand.

.Be aware of how the staff feels about you. Can they come to you with their problems without feeling incompetent? Do they feel that you respect their individuality? Some decision-makers allow themselves to be evaluated by staff on such things as what administration does, should do, needs to do, etc.

.Handle gossip directly. Explain true situation as far as it is known. Identify what is speculation.

.Recognize that a child with problems is an added burden. See that help is given to the caregiver as she works with that child and when she needs to take a break from the group.

.Have weekly (more, if necessary) meetings with staff members to discuss plans and provide feedback to staff on the results of their efforts. These meetings also give the caregiver a chance to air problems and feelings and to receive much needed support from the others.

.Manage by involvement and encourage staff to think of staff responsibilities as interlocking circles in order to help them understand that they are dependent on each other.

.Accept and encourage the practice of sharing ideas and skills. This form of interaction is a learning process for everyone, provides stimulation for staff to try new things, and recognizes and rewards their talents.

.Recognize that the caregivers are decision-makers also, and can contribute to many policy and procedure decisions for the center. Let them be the judge of whether something is too hard or too time-consuming. Some centers have let staff interview potential co-workers and indicate their preferences (with good results). Demonstrate confidence in your staff.

.Help the cook, housekeeper, or other supporting staff members realize their importance. They not only provide a needed service, but also contribute to child nurturance. They can often assist a child; the importance of their positive inter-relationships should be stressed.

.See that caregivers have the opportunity to build good, on-going relationships with families. When they understand the interactions between parent and child and have the opportunity to share the fun and interesting aspects of the child's day, they will be better able to meet the child's needs.

.Provide an environment that is well equipped with the tools that caregivers need to do the job.

.Observe the total operation of the facility. Plan with your staff to meet your responsibilities to the children.

.Set up a good employee evaluation system. One that incorporates self-evaluation with joint review has proven effective in identifying and resolving differences in expectations regarding the job.

Finally, realize how the role of a caregiver can enrich and enhance the development of the child. Your concern and understanding can be the additional support that the caregiver, parents and children need in order to move in a positive direction.

The most important element in any child care program is the caregiver--the teacher--the person who is with the children every day. She is primarily responsible for nurturing and teaching the children. When she is supported in fulfilling her duties, the children, in turn, will like themselves, will thrive and be happy.

2. Help the caregiver accommodate a special child

With the current emphasis on mainstreaming handicapped children and more protective services referrals (abused and neglected children) coming into day care, caregivers are likely to have a child with special needs in their group. When a child who is referred from protective services, is handicapped or is in distress, enters a group, the caregiver needs extra support. In these cases the simple stress of adjusting to a new child is compounded by the anxiety of making special plans and giving the child special attention. Fear of the unknown, uncertainty about one's own capability, personal prejudices and emotional reactions are all additional factors in this anxiety. Some ways to help the caregiver deal with apprehension are:

. Arrange for the caregiver to meet the child and his family, if possible. Meetings dispel many suppositions, break the ice, and start the formation of a relationship.

. Confer with the caregiver about the new child. Listen to the caregiver to find out what worries her and let her vent her feelings.

. Secure and share any information that will help the caregiver meet the child's needs and work with his family.

. Join the caregiver in planning how to meet the child's special needs.

. Help the caregiver separate fact from emotion in her thinking.

. Continue to be available when the caregiver needs to discuss the child's progress, do further planning, or have help with the child and the family.

The most important factor in successfully caring for children with special needs is the caregiver's feeling comfortable with her task. The whole process of caring for the child is built on her confidence.

3. Help the staff fight fatigue

Fatigue is one of the worst enemies of the child care profession. Physical fatigue can be minimized by paying attention to making *the environment convenient and easy to care for*. Carrying heavy equipment in and out, digging up a garden spot, pushing 10 children in the swings, positioning a water hose, lifting a child who has scraped her knee--it's no wonder that caregivers often feel exhausted by the end of the day.

Also remember that caregivers need some time away from children and with adults during the day. Mental fatigue resulting from boredom and overstimulation undoubtedly affects caregivers who spend an unrelieved day with the children. Even though they really like children and are willing to work hard, many caregivers cannot deal with the constant responsibility and demands without some recognition of their personal needs. If you only have one caregiver per group, provide a relief person for a short break in the morning and afternoon. This could be someone who conducts a music activity, the director, a floating aide, the housekeeper, etc.

4. Promote Staff Development

All of us feel and work better when we are well informed. Plan training programs together with the staff. Look for new ideas and resources. Make a habit of getting a schedule of child care and related classes offered at colleges in your area. Contact other child care providers about exchanging

training workshops. Encourage membership and participation in your NAEYC affiliate.

There are numerous training and staff development possibilities. Be alert for training opportunities and help staff use them.

5. Provide resources

Staff cannot be their most effective without proper tools. Sometimes a few resources can make the difference between mediocre and outstanding child care. These resources include not only adequate classroom and playground equipment and materials but also:

. Tools for making, repairing, and changing equipment.

. Informative magazines, pamphlets, etc., for staff as well as parents.

6. Enlist community volunteers

Well trained, carefully selected volunteers can be used in a variety of direct service roles in day care. A volunteer may assist with a group or a special child to ease the task of a caregiver who is helping a maltreated child. A volunteer can be the boost that helps bring successful changes for the child and reduces stress for the caregiver and other children. And a volunteer may offer a child the opportunity to have a prolonged one-to-one positive relationship with an adult.

Administrators should be willing to take the time to develop a volunteer program; it is time well spent. Whatever the problems a child and his family are having, try to locate someone who can help. The administrator will find it useful to:

. Be aware of individuals in the community who might volunteer their time for a professional service, then call on them when a specific need arises.

Take care not to call on any one person too often. Professionals can be an important asset to a program in terms of access to resources and credibility. They may act as consultants, provide training, increase public awareness, or become involved in the coordination of services and agencies.

. Be on the lookout for sources of volunteers who could be enlisted for regular work at the center--either with one child or with a group of children. Some sources of volunteers are churches, civic groups, and retired people's groups.

. Have a planned orientation for volunteers working in the center so they can become familiar with the facility, rules and regulations, group schedules, and limits.

. Make arrangements for the caregiver to plan with the volunteer working in her group.

. Schedule a regular, specific time for the volunteer to work so the caregiver can organize accordingly and so the volunteer knows she is being counted on.

Volunteers should have a meaningful job assigned to them. Work with them on a need that you and your staff have identified, such as music, art, rocking the babies, or a special activity with a handicapped child. Train the volunteer to do a specific task well and let him or her take the responsibility for it.

In a non-profit facility, your board may be a source of volunteers. Volunteers from boards have taken responsibility for a broad range of activities including writing for free resources, organizing work days to redo a staff lounge or repair a playground and checking monthly billings for accuracy.

If volunteers feel their work is not worthwhile, they will not be satisfied; if they feel uncomfortable with a job or unable to handle a job, they will not be satisfied; and if they are not satisfied, they will not be willing to help again. Do what you can to ensure the volunteer's satisfaction; their support will benefit the children, the caregiver and you.

Everyone wants to be needed. If you have gotten all no's in your quest for volunteers, you haven't asked the right person to do the right thing. Capitalizing on a special interest is a critical element.

Summary

To manage your most expensive resource--staff time--you must become familiar with the work to be done, the staff and their needs and abilities.

The first process is to look at the work to be done. You must know whether what staff are doing is contributing to the goals of your center or organization. This is the basic element of conserving staff time. You must be continually vigilant about:

- what are the tasks?
- why are they done?
- where are they done?
- when are they done?
- how are they done?

The second process is to look at things which lead to better staff functioning. This is where individual staff members are conserved and their productivity increased. It involves:

. treating the staff with respect

. providing a support system for staff

. helping staff with special children

. handling problems promptly

. promoting staff development

. observing everyone's work

. evaluating each person's performance

. recognizing individual accomplishments and planning for continued growth

. caring enough about each staff member to be interested in them as people

. allowing for sharing, give and take, and shared decision-making

. defining your expectations clearly

. providing a professional atmosphere

. providing resources

. using volunteers appropriately

Managing staff time is a dynamic process. The goal is staff who are doing the right tasks in an appropriate manner with satisfaction and competence.

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This book is recommended as required reading in the area of organizational development. "Excellence" means the corporation is truly well managed and utilizes members most fully toward its productive aims.

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The book defines efficiency and effectiveness and relates them to management in a most understandable fashion. A basic overview of the major considerations in time management is presented. Bliss reviews an article on achieving corporate excellence by Meyer Friedman and Ray H. Resenmann which interrelates time management, heart disease, and the kinds of stress-generating behavior which hinder effectiveness and efficiency of one's performance.

Child Development Program Division, Texas Department of Human Resources. Day care, families and stress. Austin, Texas: Author, 1980.

This book describes how the day care provider can help lower the levels of distress experience by children, caregivers and parents. Chapter topics include Stress, Family Roles, Day Care Roles, Dealing with Stress, A Message to Caregivers, and The Role of the Decision-Maker. It has nine resource appendices. Available from the Child Development Program Division, Texas Department of Human Resources, Box 2960, Austin, Texas 78769.

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This report discusses identification and definition of work priorities, management considerations, organizational structures, options for making services easily accessible to the users and potential users, and staff development activities. The intent of the report was to provide guidelines to the Texas Department of Human Resources for its day care staffing. This book (168 pages) is available for the cost of duplication from the Child Development Program Division, Texas Department of Human Resources, P.O. Box 2960, Austin, Texas 78769.